

quire changes to the state SEPA law, and can be accomplished within the general framework of permit review already in place. The County will develop any necessary changes to the County's SEPA ordinance to implement this proposal. The County will use this approach to protect salmon habitat as an interim tool, while it completes its long-term plan for recovery under the WRIA planning process. It is anticipated that the enhanced SEPA review described in the Chapter 5 Addendum will commence within the fourth quarter of 1999. *(This "early action" recommendation for SEPA is discussed in detail as an addendum to Chapter 5 of the report.)*

Improving Roads Maintenance Practices: In order to ensure that maintenance practices on King County roads provide adequate protection for salmon and habitat, the county is initiating a review of the King County Department of Transportation's Road Maintenance Best Management Practices Manual, Final Draft with the National Marine Fisheries Service.

Chapter 6: Biological Review Panel

King County convened a seven-member review panel of scientists and ecologists to begin an evaluation of its programs and policies most relevant to the conservation of salmon. The panel members all have expertise in salmon ecology, familiarity with salmon habitats in King County, and experience in project design, construction, impacts and mitigation.

The assessment was an initial, expert-based effort to review and evaluate existing programs administered by King County that may directly or indirectly benefit or hinder the conservation of salmonid species proposed for listing under the ESA. The assessments were based on written programmatic information provided to the panel by department staff, interviews with policy and technical staff, and the panel's experience with the various programs.

The panel reviewed the County's Sensitive Areas Ordinance, Clearing and Grading Code, Shoreline Master Program, and Surface Water Design Manual; the Cedar River, Bear Creek, Soos Creek, and East Lake Sammamish and Issaquah Creek Basin Plans; and the County's Wastewater Program. The panel evaluated the goals, objectives, implementation, monitoring, compliance and enforcement, interrela-



tionships and adaptive management elements for each regulation, basin plan or program. (The term “program” is used hereafter to refer generally to all of the above.)

The assessment by the panel was reviewed with the management and policy staff of the County departments responsible for the program’s implementation. Together, the panel, department managers and policy staff prepared recommendations for actions, changes or further analysis directed toward protection of salmon and other species that may be listed as threatened or endangered.

The recommendations for actions are intended specifically to provide information to the National Marine Fisheries Service that may be useful in the development of protective regulations necessary, or advisable for the conservation of threatened salmonid species.

The full report provides detailed background discussions, and the panel’s assessments and recommendations for each program, which are complex and interrelated. In general, the panel also evaluated a common set of implementation issues for each development regulation, including the adequacy of funding, staff resources, enforcement, compliance, evaluation, monitoring, and the use of variances and exceptions. Furthermore, the panel identified many inter-related issues between regulations and programs.

The panel review of basin plans began with evaluations of detailed written reviews prepared by King County Water and Land Division basin stewards. These reviews evaluated basin plan goals, accomplishments, strengths and weaknesses, and identified recommendations.

The panel made detailed recommendations specific to each plan as well as a general set of recommendations regarding all basin plans. Basin plans were completed over the span of years from 1987 through 1995. The earlier plans generally emphasized drainage issues, while the later plans were more sophisticated in also addressing salmon habitat issues.

The panel’s recommendations common to all basin plans focus on issues related to funding, staff resources, implementation and enforcement of development regulations, monitoring. The panel concluded that basin plans, the work of the Watershed Forums, and other existing studies, can serve as important building blocks for WRIA-based conservation plans. (*See Chapter 6 and Appendix 6.3 for detailed information.*)

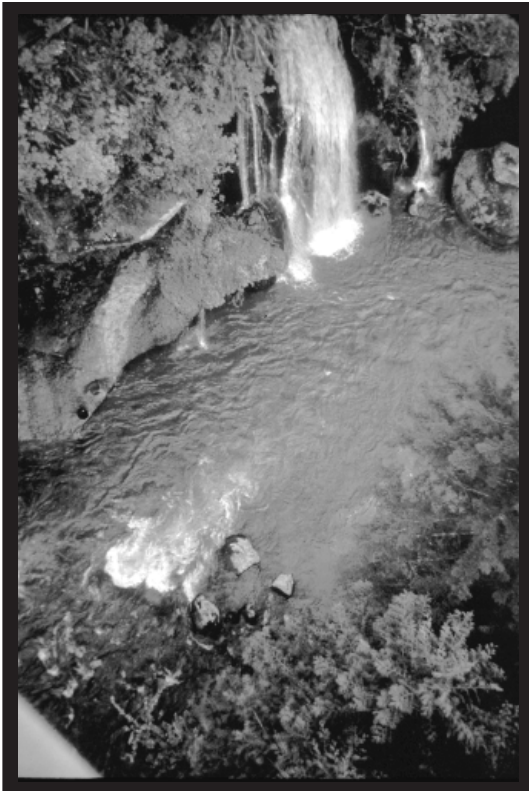
The panel offered strategies that it believes the County has authority to implement under state law or has a reasonable chance of getting such authority. These include both regulatory and non-regulatory approaches. The strategies encourage collaborative and adaptive management of a broad range of actions affecting salmonids and the ecosystem upon which they rely. These initial recommendations also address necessary authorities, commitments, funding, staffing and enforcement. In some cases, the County already has sufficient authority, staffing and funding to implement or continue strategies that are beneficial to salmon. In cases where the County currently lacks authority or resources to implement protective strategies, the King County Executive is committed

to seeking such authority and funding support as appropriate and within the County's financial means. In cases where necessary conservation actions can be undertaken successfully only in conjunction with other government and private entities, the County is committed to working with those entities.

It is the panel's opinion that implementation of some or all of these recommendations would allow King County to build on existing, successful programs to advance the conservation of threatened salmonid species. However, the panel's opinion and this report do not bind King County to implement any or all of these recommendations. Further, King County's failure to implement any or all of these recommendations does not necessarily constitute harm to threatened salmonid species.

Chapter 7: Proposed Salmon Conservation Planning Process

Conservation plans will form the backbone of King County's long-term efforts to meet the requirements of the Endangered Species Act. These plans will be developed and implemented at the watershed level through WRIAs within the Tri-County region. Each conservation plan will be science-based and include representation from the wide range of interests that reside, work and do business within the watersheds.



Pursuing development of long-term strategies at the watershed level allows King County to follow an ecosystem approach to recover and maintain chinook salmon. Further, this approach provides an effective and established base of inter-jurisdictional cooperation and knowledge on water issues, watershed planning, habitat restoration and salmon recovery issues that is unparalleled in the history of the Puget Sound area.

History of watershed planning

Water Resource Inventory Areas are defined under state regulations, and generally adhere to the watershed boundaries of major river or lake systems, such as the Snohomish and Green Rivers,

and the Cedar-Sammamish basin which includes Lake Washington. Coastal and Puget Sound WRIAs include neighboring minor drainages as well.

These WRIAs have been designated the appropriate ecological and adminis-

trative units for developing data and prioritizing decisions that significantly affect salmon habitat. For this reason, local governments in the Puget Sound region – in cooperation with state and tribal governments and other major stakeholders – have determined that development of long-term conservation strategies should be at the WRIA level. WRIA-based salmon recovery plans will focus on habitat issues, but also will integrate with harvest and hatchery policies that state and tribal governments will determine for the entire Puget Sound region.

King County has lead responsibility for the development of salmon recovery plans in the Cedar/Sammamish Watershed (WRIA 8) and the Green/Duwamish Watershed (WRIA 9). In addition, King County is supporting the planning efforts in the Snohomish/Snoqualmie Watershed (WRIA 7), about half of which is within King County, and the White/Puyallup Watershed (WRIA 10), a small percentage of which is within King County.

The Tri-County Work Plan includes activities to facilitate the coordination of all watershed-based conservation plans in the three-county area. This approach also supports the Washington State Salmon Strategy, which calls for a flexible approach that includes statewide initiatives, regional and sub-regional initiatives, and local watershed management initiatives.

As described in Chapter 5, this approach is not the beginning of watershed-based planning and stewardship in King County. Existing watershed basin plans cover areas that are now included in the larger WRIs and constitute a solid foundation on which to build WRIA salmon-recovery plans.

In 1995, King County's planning efforts transitioned from a basin planning approach to a new watershed process called the Regional Needs Assessment (RNA) for surface water management. King County, the City of Seattle and the suburban cities, voluntarily joined together to evaluate inter-jurisdictional management needs for surface water management in the major watersheds of King County.

The RNA participants recommended that inter-jurisdictional Watershed Forums be developed to coordinate the regional management of water quality, flooding and fish habitat. The Forums were convened in 1996-97 and have worked for three years to evaluate the five major watersheds in King County (Central Puget Sound, Green/Duwamish, Lake Washington/Cedar, Sammamish, and Snoqualmie/Skykomish).

The Watershed Forums established an inter-jurisdictional structure for coordinating the management of shared surface water needs, including water quality associated with non-point sources, the protection and restoration of fish habitat, and the reduction of flood hazards in King County. The Forums also developed a set of policies to guide the expenditure of regional funds for surface water management, and identified approximately \$250 million high-priority capital projects and programs and \$12 million of annual operating and maintenance needs within the five watersheds.

Through these projects and programs, King County developed an information base and a record of management actions that protect and restore key



habitat areas and key attributes of the chemical and physical structure of the watersheds. RNA projects and programs also serve as an inventory from which many high-priority early actions for King County's ESA response have been selected.

Relationship to GMA

There is a close relationship between the conservation activities required by ESA listings, and growth management initiatives already underway at the state and local level in the Puget Sound region. Habitat is the one factor of decline that is primarily the responsibility of local government. Land use and development policies and regulations are the major tools to affect changes in habitat to promote recovery of the species. The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) provides much of the land-use and regulatory framework necessary to accomplish salmon recovery under ESA.

This year, King County is undertaking several GMA initiatives to update its land use policy and regulatory documents. These initiatives will incorporate changes to the structure, process, policy and regulatory frameworks to better support habitat restoration efforts. It is anticipated that the watershed conservation planning efforts will provide valuable information for these initiatives, which are briefly described below:

- **Countywide Planning Policies Update:** The Countywide Planning Policies define the countywide vision and establish the parameters for development of the comprehensive plans of King County and the 39 cities within the county. King County will encourage an evaluation and update of policies to promote salmon recovery countywide, including an analysis of how WRIA conservation plans could be implemented by the jurisdictions.
- **King County Comprehensive Plan 2000 Update:** King County will be improving the policy framework for protection and restoration of salmon habitat. It is anticipated that the WRIA planning process will both generate and respond to proposals to change land use and zoning as well as development regulations.

Goals and Overall Approach/Structure of the Plans

The overarching goal of Tri-County ESA Response Strategy is to “restore and maintain healthy salmon populations and protect the estuaries, rivers and streams on which they rely, based on best available science.” The goals of King County's watershed planning efforts are the same as those described by NMFS in the guidance document for salmon conservation and recovery on the Pacific Coast.

The overall approach of King County's WRIA planning efforts is twofold:

- To establish a solid technical foundation based on best available science and incorporate research developed by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Treaty tribes in each WRIA.